



Keller Easterling

Yale School of Architecture

*Keller Easterling is an architect, urbanist, and writer. Her latest book, **Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades** (MIT, 2005), re-searches familiar spatial products that have landed in difficult or hyperbolic political situations around the world. Her previous book, **Organization Space: Landscapes, Highways and Houses in America**, applies network theory to a discussion of American infrastructure and development formats. A forthcoming book, **Extrastatecraft**, researches global infrastructure as a medium of polity. Ms. Easterling is also the author of **Call It Home**, a laser disc history of suburbia, and **American Town Plans**. She has recently completed two*

*research installations on the Web: "Wildcards: A Game of Orgman" and "Highline: Plotting NYC." Her work has been widely published in journals such as **Grey Room**, **Volume**, **Cabinet**, **Assemblage**, **Log**, **Praxis**, **Harvard Design Magazine**, **Perspecta**, **Metalocus**, and **ANY**. Her work is also included as chapters in numerous publications. She has lectured widely in the United States as well as internationally. Ms. Easterling's work has been exhibited at the **Queens Museum**, the **Architectural League**, the **Municipal Arts Society**, and the **Wexner Center**. Easterling is a professor at Yale's School of Architecture.*

EXTRA-STATECRAFT

Some of the most radical changes to the globalizing world are written, not in the language of international law and diplomacy but rather in the language of architecture and urbanism. Architecture and urbanism are often the literal instrument or vessel of a parallel form of polity—one generated faster than official political channels can legislate it. Architects frequently claim to be absent from the table and therefore innocent of the official policies for crafting space. Yet as it is more and more clear that space is made not by official agencies but by a growing number of nongovernmental agencies, lawless zones and discrepant characters, perhaps architects, as facilitators of power have long been seated at the table. Architecture is indeed a vessel of this extrastatecraft.

The domain of extrastatecraft is global infrastructure—not only those physical networks like highways, railroads or communication networks, but also those shared protocols of technology, urbanism and markets that format global exchanges and distributed networks of spatial products. The physical networks, both visible and invisible, made of concrete or microwaves, the silent consultancies, the repeatable environments, the peculiar belief systems of management styles, the subroutines of logistics, or the establishment of regulating standards in the global: all of these are global infrastructures.

As historian and theorist Armand Mattelart has noted, many of the infrastructure histories constitute “a return to national histories while the international is still left by the wayside” as “a field that is young and uncharted.”¹ The study of global infrastructure operates somewhere between socio-technical studies, history of science and design. Moreover, global infrastructure is both topic and

1 Armand Mattelart: *Mapping World Communication: War, Progress, Culture* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 243.



heuristic—a field as well as a means of rehearsing a different habit of mind about disposition and active forms. Just as a pilot develops a faculty for seeing wind, looking at the organizational disposition of spatial products, infrastructures or socio-technical networks involves developing a similar faculty for making palpable and available a spatial substrate that constitutes a realm of governance, authority or control in the world. We want to consider both objective forms and active forms, forms as outline, geometry as well as forms that operate in social, performative or relational registers. We want to understand the disposition immanent in organization.

Within this expanded artistic repertoire is an expanded repertoire for activism. The activist repertoire customarily relies on, among other things, resistance and refusal. Approaching the most powerful forces in the world with dissent frequently requires conviction and unity among those who have less power. It requires assembling together, refusing to be subject to abusive policies or protecting others who are the target of abuse. The imperative for agreement on common rights and principles perhaps lends an aura of certainty to activism. Indeed, for many, the vigilant maintenance of decency and justice means strongly held beliefs, established principles and forthright expression. Resistance, even in its most complex, artful and viral forms must often assume a critical, oppositional stance—an organizational disposition that faces off against authoritarian power. Though they may have the power to strike at the heart of their opponent, explicit small-scale antagonisms on the periphery prevent collusion with the center. David must kill Goliath. These are those enduring techniques of activism that have, at certain junctures in history, required enormous courage to enact.

Yet, meanwhile power frequently escapes. Using proxies and obfuscation for protection, powerful players are rarely forthright about their intentions, in part because they survive on fluid intentions. The architecture of global relations is not, of course, arranged as a series of symmetrical face-offs or head-to-head battlegrounds. There is ample evidence of overlapping networks of influence and allegiance. Moreover, it may be a mistake to disregard caprice—the subterfuge,

hoax, and hyperbole that actually rules the world. The complex logics of duplicity may be more instructive than the straightforward structure of righteousness. Indeed, the notion that there is a proper forthright realm of political negotiation usually acts as the perfect camouflage for parallel political activity. Finding the loophole to absolute logics or zero sum games, while power wanders away from the bulls eye or wriggles out to take shelter in another ruse. It may even come costumed as resistance. Goliath finds a way to pose as David, or multiple forces, assembling and shape-shifting, replacing the fantasy Goliath of monolithic capital or corporate culture with even more insidious moving targets.

Dissent is then left shaking its fist at an effigy while power mimics or confounds with some other disguise. Activism that shows up at the barricade, the border crossing and the battleground with familiar political scripts sometimes finds that the real fight or the stealthier forms of violence are happening somewhere else. The opponent of dissent becomes an even more mystical or vaporous force (e.g. Capital, Empire or Neoliberalism). Even those theories that admit to complicities and mixtures somehow still drift toward epic heraldry and the theme music of enemies and innocents—monism and binary (e.g. Empire/Counter Empire). In this way the grand strategies of the left and the right, as they are combative, even share a structural resemblance.

Righteous ultimatums that offer only collusion or refusal might present a greater obstacle than any of the quasi-mythical forces that activists oppose. Yet the admission of new techniques does not always align with the dogma or aura of certainty that attends some activist strains. Paradoxically, an attempt to aid and broaden activism can even be interpreted as a betrayal of activist principles. Stepping away from a combative stance is mistaken for neutrality. Manipulation of the market is mistaken for collusion. Positive attention to agents of systemic change rather than negative opposition to a series of enemies is mistaken for an uncritical stance. Relinquishing the tense grip of resistance is mistaken for capitulation rather than a more precise parry or a more apt strategy. Answering duplicity with duplicity is mistaken for equivocation or lack of conviction rather than a technique to avoid disclosing a deliberate strategy. There are moments to give it a name—to stand up and resist. Yet, preserving only some approaches to political leverage as authentic may foreclose on the very insurgency that activism wishes to instigate.

Activism in architecture and urbanism, even in the absence of a developed political repertoire, also drifts toward tragic stock narratives. Architects typically do what they always do: offer objective form in a nominative register that may be inflected toward or “themed” political. Designers *design* their reform, situating it



at border crossings, battlegrounds and barricades. They may do so with varying degrees of utopian monism, visionary futurology or completely plausible savvy. It seems not to matter how apt, feasible or even sly the design may be in projecting implementation. It is often relegated to a margin because it resolves all the world's dimensions into a single compatible utopia or because it makes too much sense. Alternately, architecture claims to be excluded or "not invited to the table" when policy is being made or refuses to perform for fear of being co-opted by the market—as if the market were interested or as if to manipulate the market was in any way similar to colluding with it. Encores of tragic arias about the impossibility of a political architecture support an enduring innocence that is able with steady assurance to declare pure strains of political organization or able, for instance, to separate public from private, state from market. As Jacques Rancière has said, "To ask, How can one escape the market? is one of those questions whose principal virtue is one's pleasure in declaring it insoluble."²

The righteous and innocent should be allowed to remain pure and right. The dramas and tragedies of the Masonic order of architects give pleasure to many and need draw no further critique. While fully equipped with prodigious political craft, that craft should only be deployed in the arena of careerism and should not be burdened with another political responsibility. Rather it should be allowed to remain undisturbed in the autonomous cul-de-sac that it has long requested. Dissent that would consider itself sullied by alternative tactics should also be allowed simply to be right in its own way and to organize outrage against the most venal and grisly offenses against justice.

Yet while perhaps an unwelcome cohort for those who would see activism sullied, some alternative activist techniques nevertheless stand to partner with classic forms of resistance. If many of the most powerful regimes find it favorable to operate with proxies and doubles, so might two disparate species of activism generate

2 Jacques Rancière: "The Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière", *Artforum International*, 45:7 (March 2007).



productive outcomes, if not in tandem in some other form of indirect cooperation.

For extrastatecraft, an understanding of the logics of duplicity is more useful than the binary oppositions of righteousness. *Multiple* realms of influence are kept in play to lubricate the obfuscation so important to the maintenance of power. Happily two can play at this game. The research collected here considers a dissensus that is less self-congratulatory and less automatically oppositional but potentially more effective (and sneakier). It sidesteps competitive binaries that often fuel the very violence we wish to dissipate. New objects of practice and entrepreneurialism, redefined in a relational register, reflect the network's ability to amplify structural shifts or smaller moves. If icons of piety, collusion or competition often escalate tensions, might alternative design ingenuities distract from them? In this realm of dissensus we can talk about an extended repertoire of trouble making and leverage that includes gifts compliance, misdirection, meaninglessness, humor, distraction, unreasonable innovation or spatial contagions, among many other techniques perhaps not typically associated with activism.

Extrastatecraft draws from research published in a book called *Enduring Innocence* that looked at "spatial products" as an infrastructure or a repetitive technology in the world. While regarded as the Teflon formats of neoliberalism, they frequently operate as political pawns in unexpected ways. The book also searched for additional tools with which to manipulate contemporary logics of duplicity as a disposition literally embedded in arrangement and chemistry of repeatable spatial organizations around the world. In the book there is a story about tourism in North Korea, high tech agriculture in southern Spain, automated ports, IT campuses in south Asia and the Middle East, Golf courses in China and the misadventures of commercial and religious franchises.

Spatial products are repeatable formulas for space, shaped by the parametric manipulation of, for instance, tonnage, lay-over times, housing frontage, bandwidth, tee time, stock keeping units or cheap labor. Enclosure is often a by-product of these organizations. The IT campuses that are outcroppings of satellite/fiber networks in Malaysia or Dubai or Texas or Taiwan has the same



physical arrangement and they operate by the same rules. These formats are indexical expressions of legal and logistical parameters that create worlds of self-reflexive logic, a kind of special stupidity that moves around the world finding favorable conditions.

These logistical environments are not only vessels of functional organizational parameters. They are also, ironically, the medium of obfuscation and puffy fairy tales of belief that accompany most relentless forms of power. Here are functional expressions that possess the capacity for crafty behavior and disposition. They are made by abstraction no less hyperbolic, volatile and extravagant. Indeed with nothing but a bottom line against which to reconcile history and belief, any combination of masquerades is possible. Freightened with desires, sporting their global currency, and their duty free legalities, they can slither through any jurisdictional shallows. They can become objects of desire and contention in negotiations between warring countries, messy democracies and violent distended conflict. Their hilarious and dangerous masquerades of retail, business or trade often mix quite easily with the cunning of political platforms. We expect the world to be rational. Yet as these recipes become more rationalized, they become better vessels for fiction. They are highly rationalized irrationalities.

It is useful to sample the nonsensical patois of the orgman, a character who would be something like, to borrow an example from Pierre Bourdieu, the man who sells to the father of the bride a yoke of oxen after the harvest. It is equally useful to sample the beautiful Babbitesque nonsense of the management guru and his think tanks, consultancies and motivational flip charts—for an understanding of the most deliberately rationalized systems that nevertheless resemble a kind of daft voodoo.

*Global society is a rationalized world, but not exactly what one could call a rational one.*³

3 Meyer, Drori and Hwang: *Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 269.

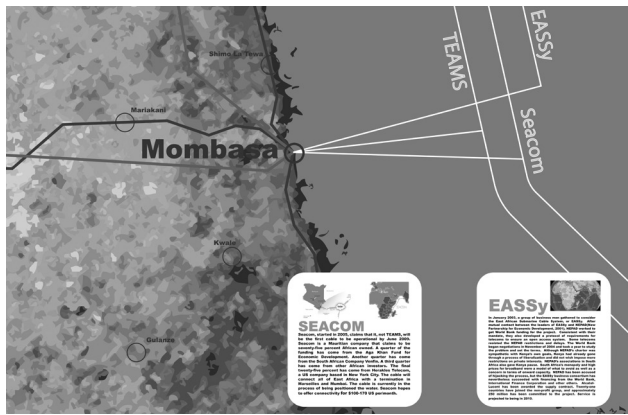
Spatial products are good examples of active forms. Just as an airplane pilot must develop a faculty for seeing wind, the designer of active forms develops a faculty for seeing the way these byproducts inflate and deflate according to even the slightest adjustment of logic. While architects are very well rehearsed in describing enclosure and the aesthetics of the object, we are under-rehearsed in understanding organization in an active register; the deltas of spatial consequence in organization and the relational, dispositional registers of aesthetic practices. We might lack a better understanding of how our spaces manipulate other cultural economic mechanisms. Often operating in a nominative rather than a relational aesthetic register, working with object form rather than both objective and active forms, we are often left designing the shape of the chess piece rather than the way the chess piece plays the world. Active forms design the means by which space disrupts or diverts, the politics of its aesthetic reception or the spread of its effects over a population. We frequently only design the object when we might design both the object and the delta.

Designing active forms develops a spatial fluency for describing the political *disposition* that is stored in the logic and arrangement of global infrastructure networks. The chemistry of this infrastructure is expressed in geometries, logics, economic mandates and networks of association. How do we further analyze this chemistry for patency, redundancy, hierarchy, recursivity or resilience as a vehicle of or recipe for aggression, submission, exclusion, collusion or duplicity? Extrastatecraft considers global infrastructures as a medium of these dispositional powers.

We might look at three different arenas of global infrastructure as a way of sampling some evidence: the free zone, submarine fiberoptic cable networks, and networks of quality management. Each of these arenas drop into a nexus of multiple networks and economies.

The Free Zone

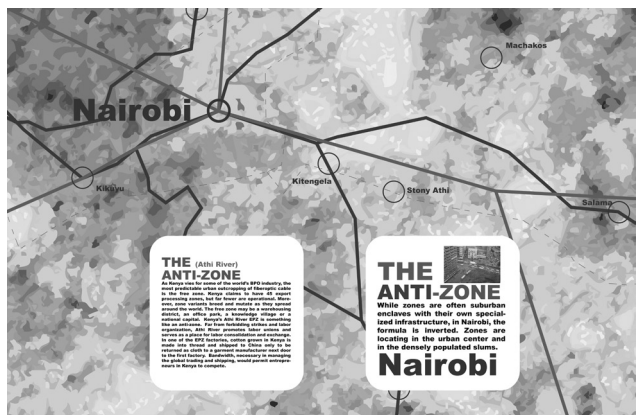
Free zone urbanism is currently the world's most powerful urban paradigm and a vivid vessel of extrastatecraft. Zones are heir to ancient pirate enclaves or the freeports of Hanseats (or Easterlings). In 1934, emulating freeport laws in Hamburg and elsewhere of the late 19th century, the United States established Foreign Trade Zone status for port and warehousing areas related to trade. As the zone merged with manufacturing, Export Processing Zones appeared in the late 1950s and 60s. Emerging in the 1970s, China's Special Economic Zones allowed for an even broader range of market activity and foreign direct investment. But even the zone as it is typically regarded around the world is breeding more promiscuously



with other “parks” or enclave formats, perhaps in part because of China’s influence. There are at least 66 terms to describe the zone. The zone now merges with tourist compounds, knowledge villages, IT campuses, and cultural institutions that complement the corporate headquarters or offshore facility. More and more programs and spatial products thrive in legal lacunae and political quarantine, enjoying the insulation and lubrication of tax exemptions, foreign ownership of property, streamlined customs and deregulation of labor or environmental regulations

Indeed, the zone as corporate enclave is a primary aggregate unit of many new forms of the contemporary global city, offering a “clean slate,” “one-stop” entry into the economy of a foreign country. Most banish the negotiations that are usually associated with the contingencies of urbanism—negotiations such as those concerning labor, human rights or environment. Many of the new legal hybrids of zone oscillate between visibility and invisibility, identity and anonymity. The data gathered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) demonstrates that special zones of various types have grown exponentially, from a few hundred in the 1980s to between three thousand and 4000 today operating in 130 countries in 2006.

With its pervasive growth and breeding, the zone often aspires to world city status. Moreover, while the zone is a space generally exempt from law and taxes as well as environmental or labor regulations, it is even, paradoxically, a new double of the national capital. These urban vessels somehow naturalize the essential duplicity involved with juggling multiple sovereignties and interests. Now major cities and national capitals are engineering their own world city *Doppelgänger*s—their own non-national territory within which to legitimize non-state transactions. The corporate city and national capital can shadow each other, alternately exhibiting a regional cultural ethos and a global ambition. City-states like Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai that assume the ethos of free zone for their entire territory have become world city models for newly minted cities like with not only

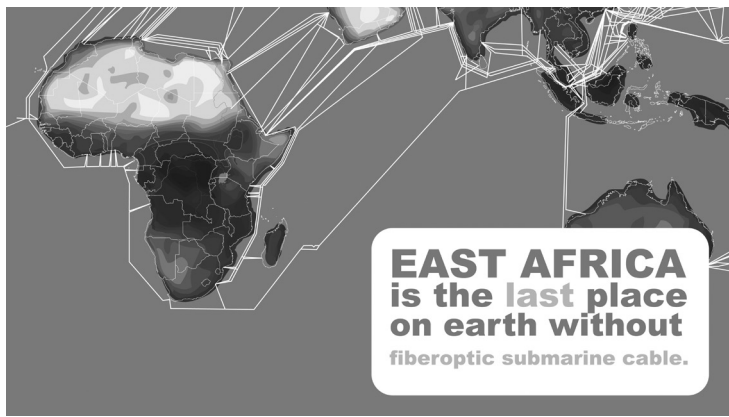


commercial areas but a full complement of programs. New Songdo City for instance, aspiring to the cosmopolitan urbanity of New York, Venice and Sydney, is a zone double of Seoul filled with residential, cultural and educational programs in addition to commercial programs. There is a Park Avenue, Canal Street, Central Park and World Trade Tower. Just as New Songdo City is a free zone double of Seoul, Astana, replacing Almaty, has become the unabashed free zone capital of Kazakhstan. The state has hired the world's architects and engineers to give the city an anticipated technical and experiential infrastructure as well as a fantasy utopia.

Agamben's notions of exception will only go so far to explain these sneakier, commercial zones, forms that, with perfect duplicity, swap and pair exemptions, playing the legalities of one country off of another. The zone aspires to lawlessness, but in the legal tradition of exception, they possess a mongrel form that adopts looser and more cunning behaviors than those associated with an emergency of state. Commercial interests do not identify a single situation within which exception is appropriate. They move between zones concocting cocktails of legal advantage and amnesty.

Fiberoptic Submarine Cable

In the last hundred years, the ocean floor has received more and more strands of submarine cable of all types; and yet East Africa—one of the most populous areas of the world—remains in a broadband shadow as one of last places on earth to receive an international fiber-optic submarine cable link. During the summer of 2009, the first of these links finally arrived. Still, broadband in Kenya, for instance, costs twenty to forty times what it does in the United States. Before the most recent cable landings, connectivity for a small BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) office with twentyfive calling stations cost \$17,000 per month, while similar offices in countries such as India, Malaysia, Mauritius, the UAE, and China could provide the same capacity for \$600–1000. East Africa has been considered the world's “missing link” in telecommunications, and as the cable



links arrive, the world will be watching to see how the new infrastructures avoid the problems that other African countries have encountered with monopolies and continued exorbitant prices.

The main mobile telephone companies in Kenya whose advertisements line the highway (e.g. Safaricom, Celtel, Zain, Orange Mobile, Telkom Kenya and Econet) project images of villagers talking on cell phones. These companies compete with parastate telcoms that have gradually been privatized since the 1990s at the urging of the IMF and World Bank. Along the same road, a billboard publishes the forty percent unemployment rate. This well-educated English-speaking population needs broadband to create viable business connections and to vie for a piece of the global outsourcing market. When the Africa One cable, designed to circle the entire continent of Africa failed, existing cable systems were extended to landings on the west coast of Africa. They stopped in South Africa, and, because of monopolies and corruption, failed to ease prices for broadband in the west. In January of 2003, a group at the East African Business summit gathered to consider an independent cable project called East African Submarine Cable System or EASSY. This time, the World Bank and Nepad, (New Partnership for Economic Development) based in South Africa were going to insist that it be an open system to avoid the problems associated with monopolies. Yet administrative delays in executing the EASSY cable were creating the same effect as the monopolies that NEPAD (new partnership for economic development) and others were trying to guard against. Dr. Bitange Ndemo, The Permanent Secretary in The Ministry for Information and Communications in Kenya, positioned his country to remain a supporter of EASSY while pursuing other options. An alternative cable plan, TEAMS, funded by the Kenyan government together with private telcoms in Kenya and the UAE, was planned to link Mombasa to international cables from the UAE. Another independent, privately funded cable plan, SEACOM, was developed to take a similar course to that of the delayed EASSY cable. The situation has been characterized as a cable war, but war is probably the least appropriate characterization of the multiple players, bargains, and points of leverage in the

complex game of bandwidth access in East Africa. The bandwidth will likely serve new employment centers that assume the form of free zones with premium infrastructure. In Kenya however, the zone is frequently not a place that forbids labor unions, but rather a center of labor union organization.

Even in a digital age, the heavy industries that provide physical infrastructure, working together with extrastate organizations like IMF, World Bank and countless NGOs create a sphere of governance and influence operating in infrastructural space.

ISO

Extrastatecraft also investigates meta-organizations, the organizations of organizations that contribute to this sphere of governance.

While on hold, a voice says “Your call will be monitored for quality assurance purposes.” Credit cards and bank cards, all .76mm thin, slide through slots and readers anywhere around the world. The threads on screws manufactured for a global market conform to a given pitch. The pictograms on the dashboard are roughly the same world-wide. Batteries are sized to fit any device and their duration is consistent. Rates of broadband information transfer are synchronized. File formats contain data links that communication with different software platforms. Management regimes share a vocabulary of jargon like “best practice” or “action plan” dictating conformance to explicit business practice.

These standards are the work of one especially vivid agent in the promulgation of standards and shared managerial forms—the International Organization for Standardization, or ISO. The ISO is a leader among a number of other standard developing and managerial organizations operating in regional, national and international contexts.

A number of such organizations, existing before the ISO, were players in its evolution and continue as partners today. For instance, the International Telecommunications Union, established in 1865, was one of the first truly international agencies. It is now a United Nation Agency, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It originally coordinated telegraph communication and then organized the use of the radio spectrum and has continued to encourage improvements and standards in telecom, ICT industries and communication systems of all sorts including that related to marine and air safety. The Electrotechnical Congress (IEC) was established in 1906 to generate standards in electronic devices. It was the first international standard organization. In 1865, The foundational conference of the International Telegraph Union is one early marker in the growth of international organizations—growth that in recent decades has been ballooning.



On May 17, 1865 the Convention of the International Telegraph Union was signed. This was the first international agreement concerning most of Europe since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.⁴

Headquartered in Geneva, the Vatican of international organizations, ISO presides over technical standards like those for roller bearings, refrigerants, lubricants, tourism or footwear, but it also generates the incantations of something called *quality*. *Quality management* anticipates the satisfaction of customers through attitude-shifting and team aspirations, and ISO hopes that in addition to technical standards, that management standards hold the greatest hope of universality. “Quality” used in the world of business and industrial management does mean what it means in common parlance. Rather than referring to a characteristic or a valued attribute it refers to procedures related to controlling and improving both material production and management practices. Quality has its own history, its own organizations, institutions publication and its own culture ethos that is now also incorporated within the ISO framework. Quality standards do not dictate specific standards for a product but rather offer management guidelines for *process* of attaining goals related to a product, goals design to ensure that products meet expectations. The value of those products is not assessed. Quality management standards outline a process for achieving internal goals related to the product. So the product and expectations related to it are intended to be the result of a “learning” organization,” but the primary result may be a rather isomorphic set of the business procedures.

Quality standards join what John Meyer has called an “organization as religion phenomenon.”⁵ The European Union has encouraged adoption of ISO 9000 guidelines and in 1992 required ISO compliance and certification as a condition

4 Anton A. Huurdeman: *The World-side History of Telecommunications* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003), p. 219.

5 Meyer, Drori and Hwang: *Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 273

within its trade policies. ISO has also developed management standards related to environment, the ISO 14000 series. Significantly, ISO 14000 standards do not control emissions but establish a lot of internal steps, inclinations, and altered habits about the environment. Quality standards anoint the user with a seal of approval that presides over a number of soft immaterial changes in attitude and style. ISO has also extended quality management standards to education, health care and, in a conflation of customers and citizen, to government.

*Standards and standardization make it possible to achieve co-ordination without a legal center of authority. Such tendencies could be seen in the EU, with its increasing use of product standards and 'soft law' as a means to further integration.*⁶

Extrastatecraft

Study of extrastatecraft is attracted to spatial entrepreneurialism, unreasonable innovation, and obdurate problems that continually resist intelligence. Architects might swim in these dirty waters with all the other skills, butlers and go-betweens, looking for new points of leverage within the fictions and persuasions that we already have running through our fingers. Some backstage knowledge of the bagatelle in exchange, the players in the game and the cards being dealt returns more information about the tools and techniques of extrastatecraft. Expelling utopian prescriptions in favor of agility, ricochet and cultural contagion, extrastatecraft tutors a different species of spatiopolitical activism in the back channels of global infrastructure.

6 Peter Mendel: "The Making and Expansion of International Management Standards: The Global Diffusion of ISO 9000 Quality Management Certificates." In: Meyer, Drori and Hwang: *Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 137–166.